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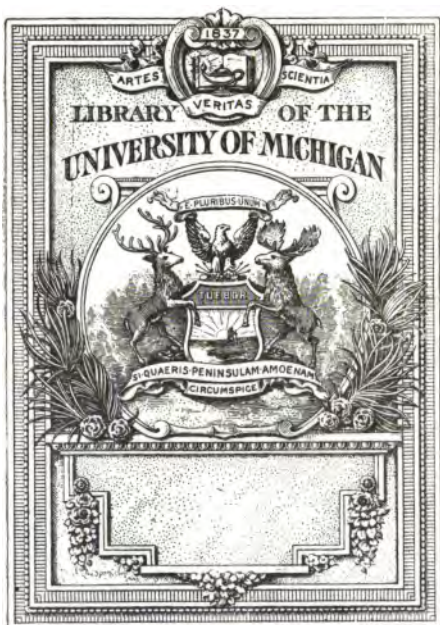
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The Ladies of Cranford

A Sketch of English Village Life  
Fifty Years Ago

In Three Acts



BY MARY BARNARD HORNE

*Author of "The Peak Sisters," "Prof. Baxter's Great Invention,"  
"The Book of Drills," etc.*

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BOSTON  
WALTER H. BAKER & CO

1879

# The Ladies of Cranford

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## CHARACTERS

|                         |                                 |              |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| MISS MATILDA JENKYNs,   | <i>the Rector's daughter</i>    |              |
| MISS MARY SMITH,        | <i>her visitor</i>              |              |
| MISS JESSIE BROWN,      | <i>a new resident</i>           |              |
| MISS POLE,              | <i>a friend to Miss Jenkyns</i> |              |
| MRS. FORRESTER,         | <i>born a Tyrrell</i>           |              |
| MISS BETTY BARKER,      | <i>a retired milliner</i>       |              |
| THE HON. MRS. JAMIESON, | <i>a leader in society</i>      |              |
| MARTHA,                 | <i>maid to Miss Jenkyns</i>     |              |
| PEGGY,                  | <i>maid to Miss Barker</i>      |              |
| MRS. PURKIS,            | <i>a country woman</i>          | } Customers. |
| LITTLE SUSAN,           | <i>her daughter</i>             |              |
| JENNIE,                 | <i>a country girl</i>           |              |
| LITTLE JAMES,           | <i>a small boy</i>              |              |

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ACT I.—SCENE, Miss Matty's Parlor—Afternoon Tea.

ACT II.—SCENE, Same—"Miss Matilda Jenkyns, licensed to sell tea."

ACT III.—SCENE, Miss Barker's Parlor—A Card Party.

TIME, ABOUT 1840.



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M. A. T. Jul. 22, 16.

## COSTUMES.

Costumes may be found in the edition of Cranford, illustrated by Hugh Thomson. They should be carefully reproduced, and the bonnets made to look like illustrations.

MISS MATTY is a delicate little old lady, with a sweet face, and an undecided manner, as found in frontispiece, and in pages 62 and 73.

MISS POLE is tall and thin, with a stiff manner, and a rather strong-minded appearance—but she succumbs to ruffles at the party—and wears seven brooches, which should be obvious. See page 135.

MRS. FORRESTER is a tiny old lady—very shabby and quite poor—rather deaf but of exceedingly good family.

MISS BARKER—overdressed and has the appearance of using up her stock in trade, in the way of ribbons and laces.

MRS. JAMIESON—a large florid woman—very languid—speaks with a drawl. See last illustration in book.

MARY SMITH and JESSIE BROWN should be pretty young girls—one dark and the other light. MARY—pages 232 and 242. JESSIE—page 38.

MARTHA—a large awkward servant—who blunders about and makes much business of keeping on paper paths and of her devotion to MISS MATTY. See pages 78, 163, 242, 250.

PEGGY—a tidy little maid—like illustration, page 183.

MRS. PURKIS—common country woman, in shawl and bonnet. Children and customers dressed like those on pages 266 and 284.

## PROPERTIES.

Old-fashioned furniture, stiff-backed chairs, an old square piano, or possibly a melodeon or parlor organ would do. Can-  
delabras and old-fashioned candlesticks, cards for preference—a card-table, tray, with pretty china, tea chests, tumblers and jars for candy, scales, etc., for store—see frontispiece to Cranford. Brown paper sewed together in long strips to make the paper paths—newspapers can be placed in other places on floor.



# The Ladies of Cranford.

## ACT I.

SCENE.—MISS MATILDA JENKYN'S *parlor. Tea-table R. C. Spinnet L. Sofa R. F. Fireplace and mantel R. Candles on mantel. Door L. B. Door R. Chairs scattered about. Room arranged in prim manner, but tastefully, with signs of past elegance. Newspapers spread over carpet, here and there. A path of brown paper leads from door L. B., to tea-table. MARY SMITH and JESSIE BROWN discovered sitting together on sofa—talking confidentially. MARY has plain sewing; JESSIE with knitting-work. Bright-colored wools heaped about. As curtain rises girls return to work, as if they had just embraced.*

MARY. There, *now* we will attend to the knitting. (*Showing JESSIE.*) No, no, put your thread *over*—that's right. Now go on. (*JESSIE knits, MARY sews.*) I never do fancy work when I visit in Cranford. It is such a good opportunity to make my father's shirts.

JESSIE. Don't you find it exceedingly tiresome?

MARY. What, making shirts or visiting in Cranford?

JESSIE. O, both. Cranford is so dull.

MARY. Jessie you don't half know the place yet, or you would never call it dull. Now—knit back—plain.

JESSIE. But it *is* dull, nevertheless. Nothing ever happens here. Such a dead monotony. No births, no marriages, no deaths, even.

MARY (*laughing*). How can there be births or marriages in a community of widows and maiden ladies, and not a *man* in the place? And as for deaths, people can only die of old age, here, it is so healthy.

JESSIE. Then why, Mary, do you find Cranford so interesting?

MARY. I cannot tell you. There is a quaint charm about it, that suits my fancy. I have made visits here ever since I was a little girl in pinafores—and—well—there is nothing like it—not even in London.

JESSIE. I should think not.

MARY. The dear old ladies are so irresistible. Put your thread *over*—take up two stitches, and seam. That's right.

(MARY jumps up, moves a newspaper to another place on the carpet and resumes seat on sofa.)

JESSIE. Now, what did you do *that* for?

MARY. I—why Jessie—I was practicing elegant economy à la Cranford. Those papers are to preserve Miss Matty's new carpet from the rays of the sun, and I was chasing a sunbeam.

JESSIE. O (*knitting*), shall I seam back?

MARY. Yes, dear. Now, do you see that paper path from the door to the table? That is for Martha to walk upon, when she brings the tea—to save the carpet.

JESSIE. O, how droll!

MARY. Do people make paper paths in London?

JESSIE. Hardly. But is there need of such economy?

MARY. Many people in Cranford appear to be in straitened circumstances. But they do not acknowledge it. O, my, no!

JESSIE. Well, *we* are downright poor.

MARY. Sh! Don't whisper it in Cranford.

JESSIE. Why, that is the reason for our coming here.

MARY. Well, there is no need of shocking the élite of Cranford by mentioning it. Now, seam back.

JESSIE. Who are the élite, Mary?

MARY. Can you ask? First and foremost—the Hon. Mrs. Jamieson—and then—the rest of us.

JESSIE. There, Mary. I have learned the stitch and I must go. I promised to teach it to Miss Pole as soon as ever I got it.

MARY. But you will stop on your return, and have a cup of tea?

(Rolls up work. Enter MARTHA walking carefully on paper path. Stops abruptly at terminus. JESSIE gathers up worsted and prepares for departure.)

MARY (*standing*). O, Martha, is that you?

MARTHA (*sniffing*). Yes, miss.

MARY. Martha, what is the matter?

MARTHA. Nothin', miss.

MARY. Then what do you want?

MARTHA. Missus sent me to say, as she presents her compliments to Miss Brown, and will she remain to drink a cup o' tea. She is very sorry that she is at present engaged in the cu—cu—

MARY. Culinary department?

MARTHA (*meekly*). Yes, miss.

JESSIE (*having put on her bonnet, which she has taken from piano and gathered up her work*). Please tell your m'stress, that I shall be most happy to return in time for tea. (*Kisses MARY. Exit, R. B.*)

MARY (*returning from L. B.*). Martha, why do you look so unhappy. Don't you find your place comfortable?

MARTHA. Well, Ma-am—missus is very kind, and there's plenty to eat and drink, and no more work but what I can do easy, but— (*Twisting the corner of her apron.*)

MARY (*seating herself again and sewing*). But what, Martha?

MARTHA (*sniffing*). It seems so hard of missus, not to let me have any followers; there's such lots of young fellows in the town; and many a one has offered to keep company with me; I may never get in such a likely place again, an' it's like wasting a good opportunity—it is miss. (*Cries.*)

MARY. I wouldn't take it so to heart, Martha.

MARTHA. Many a girl as I knows, would have 'em unbeknownst to missus; but I've given my word, an' I'll stick to it.

MARY. That's right, Martha.

MARTHA. An' such a capable kitchen for hidin' 'em. There's such good dark corners. I counted 'em up, last Sunday night, when I was cryin' because I had to shut the door in Jim Hearn's face. And him such a stiddy young man, fit for any girl. (*Cries.*)

MARY. There, Martha, be a good girl and don't fret. I think I hear Miss Matty coming. (*Exit MARTHA, L. B.*) So there are *two* love affairs in Cranford, for I believe that I have discovered Jessie's secret. However, Martha doesn't count for she isn't in genteel society.

*Enter MISS MATTY, R.*

MISS MATTY. Where is Jessie? I hope she hasn't gone. I really came just as soon as the cakes were out of the oven. Did Martha deliver the message?

MARY. Certainly, Miss Matty, and Jessie is coming back.

MISS M. (*sitting L.*). I think, dear, that we may expect callers, because one day has elapsed since your arrival, and the ladies will feel that you have had ample time to rest.

MARY (*aside*). I should think so. A journey of fifteen miles.

MISS M. (*rising*). What did you say Mary? Fifteen miles is a long distance to travel in one day.

(MISS MATTY *moves papers during next lines.*)

MARY. And I must return these calls?

MISS M. On the third day. I dare say your mamma has told you, my dear, never to let more than three days elapse between receiving a call and returning it; and also that you are never to stay longer than a quarter of an hour. (*Sits after changing papers.*)

MARY. But am I to look at my watch? How am I to find out when a quarter of an hour has passed?

MISS M. You must keep thinking about the time, my dear, and not allow yourself to forget it in conversation. (*Rising.*) Now, my dear, lay aside your work, and we will retire to our rooms to make some slight preparations for company. This cap is hardly fit to receive in, although it was Deborah's best.

MARY (*folding her work*). Miss Matty, I have discovered a secret.

MISS M. And do you think, dear, that you ought to disclose it?

MARY (*rising*). I don't know what I *ought* to do, but I am going to tell *you*, that Jessie Brown has a lover. (*Lays work on table.*)

MISS M. (*sitting down abruptly on sofa R.*). Dear—dear me! A lover? Jessie Brown?

MARY (*standing by table*). Yes, a lover. An officer in the army, and she refused to marry him, in order to nurse that poor sick sister.

MISS M. My dear, it is quite—quite exciting. And where is he now? The officer, I mean.

MARY. O, I don't know that. It is quite hopeless, I imagine.

MISS M. Dear—dear me. A love affair in Cranford. It takes me back to my youth, when—what *am* I saying, my dear?

MARY (*coming over to MISS M.*). You were going to tell me about *your* lover, Miss Matty. You must have had one, you know.

MISS M. (*embarrassed*). O, no, dear, that is—no *particular* person. Of course I had lovers like all young girls. You see, dear, it wasn't so strange, because I was *quite* nice looking, when I was young. I had very pretty hair, and not a bad mouth.

MARY (*sitting on sofa and taking MISS M.'s hand*). You must have been a *perfect* dear.

MISS M. (*after a short pause*). Mary, my dear, I haven't told you the truth. There *was* a particular person that I thought I should marry, a great many years ago, and he is dead and gone now,—and he never knew how it all came about that I said *no*. (*Pause.*) Deborah knew—and I suppose it was all for the best.

MARY (*stroking her hand*). Poor Miss Matty. And did you never see him afterward?

MISS M. Not for thirty years. And then we met. He was Miss Pole's cousin, but he never came to Cranford after that time, until the year before he died—and then he—he called on me—and gave me a book of poems.

MARY. How romantic!

MISS M. Do you think so, my dear? Well, I don't know. The poetry isn't as good as Dr. Johnson's, but I prize the book highly.

MARY. Who was the author?

MISS M. A young man, dear, quite unknown, but he has done very well, considering his extreme youth. His name is Tennyson, I think, Alfred Tennyson. (*Starting up.*) O, what have I been saying? My sister and I never spoke of the things that happened before Peter went away.

MARY. Dear Miss Matty, won't you tell me about Mr. Peter.

MISS M. It is a very sad story. I wonder if Deborah would like me to tell. (*Goes cautiously to door L. B.*) Let me close the door first. No—I won't risk it. (*Calls off.*) Martha!

MARTHA (*answering off*). Yes, missus.

MISS M. I must give Martha some instructions about tea and make sure she does not listen

*Enter MARTHA, L. B. ; business of walking on paper.*

MISS M. We are expecting callers, to-day, Martha, and some of them will probably stay to tea. See that everything is all right, and Martha, we will have a plate of the sponge biscuits. Bring the tray when I ring.

MARTHA (*curtsies*). Yes, missus.

MISS M. And you will be very careful, Martha, not to upset anything, and to make a good appearance?

MARTHA. O yes, missus. (*Going, backing out, and always trying not to step off paper path.*)

MISS M. And, Martha?

MARTHA (*returning*). Yes, missus.

MISS M. You are young. (*Pause.*)

MARTHA (*after a moment, curtsies*). Yes, please, ma'am: two-and-twenty last October, please, ma'am.

MISS M. Perhaps, sometime, Martha, you may meet with a young man you like, and who likes you —

MARTHA. I've met him, ma'am.

MISS M. (*ignoring interruption*). And if he is respectable and well-to-do, I have no objection to his coming to see you *once a week*.

MARTHA. Please, marm, there's Jim Hearn, he's a joiner makin' three an' sixpence a day. He's six foot one in his stocking-feet, please marm, and he'll be glad enough to come to-morrow night, I'll be bound.

MISS M. You can go now, Martha. (*Exit MARTHA.*) I wish Martha had a little more maidenly reserve. (*Closes door; returns to F.*)

MARY. Don't tell me about Mr. Peter, if it hurts you, dear Miss Matty.

MISS M. (*sitting in chair L.*). My dear, I thought you knew about our brother. Everybody in Cranford knows how wild he was, always in scrapes. Poor boy, he was always so full of fun, and so was I. (*Chuckles.*) We were a pair. And Deborah—poor dear—she was so proper—always reading and writing letters, and thinking of the proprieties. Our father looked upon Deborah as his right hand, and our mother—well—her duty seemed to consist in getting Peter out of his scrapes. One day the boy passed all bounds and played a trick on the people of Cranford, that was discovered by my father. O, it was dreadful. My father flogged him in the presence of the very people he had fooled. It was just a harmless joke too. When my father stopped to take breath, Peter said—"Have you done enough, sir?" Then he made a low bow to the spectators quite like a gentleman and he walked off, and has never returned. (*Wipes her eyes.*)

MARY. Of course he is dead,

MISS M. Well, I don't know. If he is, I ought to wear mourning, and if he isn't, I ought to expect him to return at any moment, and—I really don't know *what* to think.

*Enter* MARTHA, L. B.

MARTHA. Miss Barker is below, ma'am, shall she come up?

MISS M. Certainly, Martha. My dear I *must* change my cap. Will you remain? (*Takes MARY'S work; exit rapidly R. Exit* MARTHA, L. *Enter* MISS BARKER, L. *at once*.)

MISS BARKER (*greeting* MARY). Good-afternoon, my dear Miss Smith. Cranford society will be pleased to welcome you. Did you have a pleasant journey?

MARY. Thank you, Miss Barker. The ride over was delightful.

*Enter* MISS MATTY, *hurriedly, with one cap on top of the other*.

MISS M. Excuse me, Miss Barker, for keeping you waiting. Mary, where are my spectacles? (*MARY finds them on table, and hands them to her*.) Thank you, my dear. (*To* MISS BARKER.) Pray be seated.

MISS B. I took the liberty to call, madam, to welcome Miss Smith and to inquire for you. I hope, madam, you are enjoying good health.

MISS M. You are very welcome, Miss Barker, and I am quite well, yes, quite, quite well, thank you. And you?

MISS B. (*fanning herself*). I am not as well as usual, Miss Jenkyns. The accident to my poor Alderney has upset my nerves.

*Enter* MARTHA, L. B., *followed by* MISS POLE and JESSIE.

MARTHA (*at door, announces*). Miss Pole—Miss Brown.

[*Exit* MARTHA.

MISS M. (*coming forward*). How do you do? I am very glad to see you. (*Greetings; hand-shaking*.) Won't you be seated?

(*JESSIE sits at spinnet. MARY stands near. MISS BARKER on sofa R.; MISS POLE, very erect, on stiff-backed chair L., MISS MATTY at tea-table C.*)

MISS M. Miss Barker was just speaking of the accident to her cow.

MISS P. (*to* MISS BARKER). How is she? The cow, I mean.

MISS B. Thank you, madam, she is slowly recovering.

MARY. What happened to her?

MISS B. She fell into the lime-pit; and O, Miss Smith, she was a pitiable sight, when she came out. Not a hair on her. I shed tears, when I beheld her, so naked, cold and miserable.

MISS P. Much better have had her killed.

MARY. What did you do?

MISS B. I thought of trying a bath of oil, but our good doctor

advised me to make her a flannel waistcoat and flannel drawers, if I wished to keep her alive.

(JESSIE and MARY laugh.)

MISS P. Have you done so?

MISS B. I have just finished the garments to-day, and she will wear them to-morrow.

MARY and JESSIE (*laughing*). How very droll.

MISS B. Dark-grey flannel, and she looks very well in them.

MISS P. I consider the whole thing ridiculous in the extreme. The doctor was making a fool of you.

MISS M. Dear me! I can't think our good doctor would—would make a joke of so serious a matter.

MISS B. Indeed no. He was quite sober and dignified, and told me just how to cut the garments.

MISS P. Bah! Men will be men. My father was a man and I know the sex pretty well.

MISS B. And yet madam, there are women who will marry them.

MISS P. So much the worse for the women. Men are dangerous creatures.

MISS M. I don't deny, Miss Pole, that men are troublesome in a house, but then in an emergency, a man is very dependable.

MISS P. Miss Jenkyns, don't talk nonsense. We ought to congratulate ourselves, that so far we have escaped matrimony. It argues great natural credulity in a woman, if she can't keep herself from being married.

MISS M. Well. I don't know. Jessie, my dear, can't you play something to us?

JESSIE. Certainly, if you wish. (*Turns to spinnet. Plays "Annie Laurie" softly.*)

(MISS M. *nods* to MARY, who rings bell gently. MARTHA appears at door; *nods* at MARY then sees MISS MATTY'S two caps; covers her face with her hand, laughs, and beckons MISS MATTY with vehement and awkward gesture. MISS MATTY glides out in consternation, returns almost immediately with cap set right, followed by MARTHA with tea-tray. MISS MATTY pours tea, assisted by MARY.)

MISS M. You will let me give you some tea, Miss Betty?

MISS B. Thank you. (*MARY passes tea.*)

MISS M. (*to* JESSIE *when she stops playing*). Thank you, dear. That was very sweet. Now let me give you a cup of tea. Martha, the cakes, please. (*MARTHA passes cakes, awkwardly. Occasionally nudging a lady to attract attention.*)

MISS P. (*to* MARY *who gives her a cup*). No, no sugar.

MISS B. The Hon. Mrs. Jamieson always takes two lumps of sugar in her tea.

MISS M. She was probably brought up to indulge in luxuries.

MISS P. More likely she's got a sweet tooth. Have you heard about the *Bank*? [Exit MARTHA.]

MISS B. No. What Bank? Don't tell us that anything else has happened in Cranford.

MISS P. (to MISS B.). The Town and County Bank.

*Enter MARTHA with two letters which she gives to MARY. MARY hands one to MISS MATTY, who rises and comes forward.*

MISS M. Will you excuse me, ladies. (*Opens letter.*) It is a very civil invitation, asking me to attend an important meeting of the shareholders of the Town and County Bank. So you see, ladies, it is all right. I am sure it is very kind of them to remember me. Whom is your letter from, Mary.

MARY (*seriously*). O, I am so sorry, Miss Matty. My father thinks the Bank is in a very bad way.

MISS P. (*standing*). Stopped payment. Heard it this afternoon. I should say it was a serious matter. I hope you haven't much in the Bank, Matilda?

(MISS M. *sits* C. *dismayed*; MARY *stands* R. C., JESSIE L. C., MISS P. *stands* L., MARTHA *appears* at door L. B. *wiping her eyes with apron.*)

MISS B. (*rising* L.). O, Miss Matty, don't say that you are ruined.

MISS M. If that bank goes wrong, I shall lose one hundred and forty-nine pounds, thirteen shillings, and four pence a year. I shall only have thirteen pounds left.

GIRLS (*kneeling beside her and taking her hands*). O, Miss Matty!

MISS P. One never knows when one is safe in these days.

MISS B. What will you do, Miss Matty?

MISS M. I don't know, dears. I'm not a great manager, but I suppose I shall get along some way. I hope it isn't wrong—not wicked—but oh! I am so glad poor Deborah is spared this. She couldn't have borne to come down in the world. She had such a noble, lofty spirit.

CURTAIN.

## ACT II.

SCENE.—*Same as Act I. Spinnet closed. Table R. F. with cloth—the table plain, rather long, with scales for weighing, tumblers filled with colored candy, lozenges, peppermints, acid drops, etc. Box or chest of tea, beside table to F. Chair for MISS MATTY, and any little accessories to make R. side of room look like a shop. Desk on table. The paper path now extends to this table and across the F. for customers to stand upon. MARTHA discovered dusting room. Broom and dustpan on chair L.*

MARTHA (*at counter, R.*). Well, now, missus do seem real happy, and the bit things to sell takes up the poor dear lady's mind. But it's lucky Jim Hearn married me so's to look after her, or she'd be a starvin' this blessed minute, for sellin' over-weight and under-price, out o' the kindness of her 'art.

(*Bell rings. MARTHA goes to door L. B. Enter MARY SMITH.*)

MARY. How do you do, Martha? And how is Miss Matty? And *where* is she?

MARTHA. Dear me, miss, you do be-juggle one, with your questions all on top one another. Miss Matty she's well, an' she's in her room—an' as for I—well—I've married Jim, and that's all there is to it.

MARY. 'But Martha——

MARTHA. Don't "but Martha" me——

MARY. Well?

MARTHA. I'm glad you begin with a "*well*"—'cause that's how it turned out. I must allow that I took Jim Hearn, as it was by the collar, an' I marched him into Miss Jenkyns' parlor—this same parlor as you sees, and Jim was that dazed he walked all over the new carpet. He was that flabbergasted, he never said a word for himself.

MARY. Why what did you expect him to say?

MARTHA. The great oaf! I expected him to tell missus as how he was a-dyin' to marry me off-hand, and that he and I wanted to take a boarder!

MARY. A boarder?

MARTHA. Yes, miss, a *boarder*. Some body 'd got to support missus. And there he stood, like a great fool; and never said a word! and him an axin' and an axin' me, up to that blessed minute to set the day. Well, I set it, then and there.

MARY. Martha, you're a trump.

MARTHA. Well, I won't say as I didn't feel like sinkin'

through the floor, when Jim held back and said, "he dare say he shouldn't mind, when 'twas all over, but as how marriage nails a man." Them's his very words.

MARY. And still you persisted?

MARTHA. Laws\*yes. Jim was all right. I told missus it was the suddenness of the joy, as overtook him, and missus she says—so serious-like—"Marriage is a very solemn thing, Martha." Jim, he argued—but we fixed the day all right. Now you see, we both live here and we takes good care o' the place and Missus.

*Enter MISS MATTY, R., in her bonnet and shawl. MARTHA abruptly returns to her dusting. MARY greets MISS MATTY.*

MISS M. My dear, dear girl, have you just arrived? I am so glad to see you.

MARY. Dear Miss Matty, how cosy it all seems!

MISS M. (*whispering*). Did you see the sign over the door?

MARY. I never noticed it.

MARTHA. Hm! Of course you wouldn't. Letters too small. I'd a had 'em good an' big.

MISS M. Martha! (*To MARY*.) You see Mary, I didn't want to attract too much attention. Come and look.

*(They go to door R. B., MARTHA following.)*

MARY. (*reads*). "Matilda Jenkyns, licensed to sell Tea." That is very modest indeed.

MISS M. (*to MARY, returning, C.*). I wonder if Deborah cares so very much—where she is, if I'm not genteel. (*MARTHA remains at D. shaking duster.*)

MARY (*giving her a kiss*). O, Miss Matty.

MISS M. There is one comfort, my dear, men never buy tea. I should be so afraid if one of them should come blustering in—

*(MARTHA has stepped out of sight. Loud smack heard.)*

MISS M. Dear—dear me! What was that?

MARY. What, Miss Matty. What did you hear?

MISS M. (*her eyes round with dismay*). It sounded like—

*Enter MARTHA, looking rosy.*

MISS M. Martha, I heard something just now—outside and it sounded like—

MARTHA. Kissin' ma'am?

MISS M. Martha, how can you speak so lightly of so solemn a matter?

MARTHA. It was only Jim, kissin' me good-bye—and—please ma'am—we're married—you know.

MISS M. Yes—yes I know—but somehow it—it shocks one's nerves a little—yes—a—little.

MARTHA (*aside, picking up broom and going off*). The poor innocent!

MISS M. (*to MARY*). You will make yourself at home my dear and excuse me while I call on our good Mr. Johnson.

MARY. O certainly.

MISS M. You see, I am selling so much tea, Mary, that I am afraid it may detract from his trade, and I want to ask him if he minds. I couldn't bear to injure *him* in any way, you know. Good-bye, dear. [*Exit L. B.*]

MARY (*untying bonnet*). Poor dear Miss Matty. (*Removes bonnet, and mantilla; puts them on spinnet. Bell rings; MARY goes to door L. B. Enter JESSIE.*)

MARY (*embracing JESSIE*). You see, I have come back.

JESSIE. Cranford draws you like a magnet.

MARY. Do you like it any better?

JESSIE. Well, I should not care to live here always, but, Mary, they are dear good people. Do you know what your old ladies have done?

MARY. You mean to help Miss Matty?

JESSIE. Yes. Miss Pole started it. They met at her house, all excepting Mrs. Jamieson. Miss Pole waited for her sometime, then opened the meeting thus. (*Imitates MISS POLE.*) "We, the ladies of Cranford in my drawing-room assembled, can resolve on something, I imagine. We are none of us what may be called *rich*, though we all possess a genteel competency, sufficient for tastes that are elegant and refined, and we would not if we could, be vulgarly ostentatious." Isn't that good, Mary?

MARY. Capital! Well, what did they do?

JESSIE. Do, that is the grand part. They each contributed what they could spare out of their yearly incomes in a sealed envelope, and they have asked me to present these envelopes to you (*gives MARY several envelopes*) in order that your father may take charge of the affair, and give the money to Miss Jenkyns in such a way that she shall never know from whence it comes.

MARY (*wiping her eyes*). The dear old ladies. (*Puts letters in piano.*) Jessie, do they ever say anything here about Miss Matty's brother Peter?

JESSIE. Not a word.

MARY. Do you know what I've done?

JESSIE. No, what?

MARY. I've written to him.

JESSIE. How do you know whether he is alive?

MARY. I don't.

JESSIE. Or where to address the letter?

MARY. I didn't.

JESSIE. Then what do you expect to come of it?

MARY. I don't know.

(*Bell rings; MARTHA enters R. B., goes to door L. B.*)

MARTHA. A customer, miss.

[*Exit MARTHA, L. B.*]

(*Enter JENNY with large bouquet; walks on paper path to*

*counter; stops in front. MARY darts behind table; JESSIE laughs.)*

JENNY (*bobbing curtsey*). Granny sent these posies, please ma'am, and said as how she'd like a pound o' tea.

MARY (*taking flowers*). Are these flowers for Miss Jenkyns?

JENNY. Aye, they be.

MARY. Jessie, come help me.

*(Business of weighing tea. JESSIE puts flowers in glass on table. Bell rings.)*

MARTHA (*announces*). Miss Pole—Mrs. Forrester.

*(MARY and JESSIE come forward. Greet ladies. JESSIE returns and makes up package of tea. Ladies politely ignore the shop during entire call, MISS POLE sitting L. and never looking toward table R. Business with child in paying for tea, etc., during following conversation.)*

MISS P. (*greeting MARY*). When did you come?

MARY. I have just arrived.

MRS. F. What did you say, dear, came yesterday?

MARY (*louder*). No, to-day, Mrs. Forrester.

MRS. F. Eh!

MARY. To-day. (*Offers chairs L. F.; sit.*)

MRS. F. (*to MARY*). I hoped to find you, my dear. (*Patting MARY's hand and whispering.*) A little matter of business, you understand?

MARY (*nodding*). All right.

MISS POLE. Where is Matilda?

MARY. Miss Matty will be here directly. By the way, Miss Pole, Jessie and I were just speaking of Mr. Peter Jenkyns. What was the very last thing heard of him?

MISS P. Several years ago, Miss Smith, we heard that he was elected Great Lama of Thibet, whatever that may be.

MRS. F. What did you say? Whom were you speaking of?

MARY (*loudly to MRS. F.*). Mr. Peter.

MRS. F. O yes. Peter Jenkyns. He was elected Great Lama of something. Do you think the veiled prophet in Lalla Rookh was meant for the Great Lama?

MISS P. Nonsense, Mrs. Forrester. I don't believe there's a word of truth in the report. A llama is a beast of burden.

MRS. F. A beast did you say? O, no. Peter was quite the gentleman, and not so ugly either only for his freckles.

MISS P. I said, a llama was a beast.

MRS. F. What kind of a beast, Miss Pole?

MISS P. Well, I'm not sure. I don't know whether they are carnivorous or —

MARTHA (*announces L. B.*). Miss Barker.

MARY (*meeting her*). How do you do, Miss Barker. (Miss

B. bows to JESSIE. MARY offers chair.) Miss Matty will be here presently.

MRS. F. Perhaps Miss Barker can tell us about the llama. Whether he is a carnivorous or — (*hesitates.*)

MISS P. A graminivorous beast?

MISS B. (*hesitating.*) I—I—am sure, ladies, that the Hon. Mrs. Jamieson would know.

MISS P. But she isn't here.

MRS. F. I always get confused between carnivorous and graminivorous, just as I do between horizontal and perpendicular. (*Rising and speaking apologetically.*) But then in my day the only use people made of four syllabled words was to teach one how to spell them. Mary, my dear. (*MARY follows R. F.*)

MRS. F. (*to JESSIE; aside.*) Miss Jessie, have you given Mary the envelopes?

JESSIE. Indeed yes.

MARY. It is so kind of you all.

MRS. F. (*trembling and tearful.*) My dear I—I came to tell you, that—that the amount of my contribution is very, very small, but my dear so is my income—and—my love and regard for Miss Matty—are not at all in proportion to my gift. I gave, my dear, every penny I could spare, and—and not suffer—privation.

MARY (*patting her hand.*) It is very noble of you, dear Mrs. Forrester.

MRS. F. I do so wish I was rich. Good-bye, dear. Good-morning. (*To MISS POLE and MISS BARKER, who have been conversing with each other. Exit L. B.*)

MISS B. The Hon. Mrs. Jamieson once said she believed a great Lama was a sort of *prince*.

MISS P. Prince or no prince, if Peter Jenkyns is on the face of this earth, he ought to come home and take care of his sister.

MARY. But *when* was it, you heard that Mr. —

*Enter MISS MATTY, L. B. meeting JENNY going out with package of tea.*

MISS M. How do you do, Jenny. Some *more* tea, for Granny?

JENNY (*with curtsy.*) Yes, Miss.

MISS M. (*to JENNY.*) Good-bye, dear. O, Miss Pole, how do you do, and Miss Barker. (*Shakes hands.*)

MARY. And Jessie?

MISS M. And Miss Jessie. I am sorry to have been delayed. (*To MARY.*) It is all right, my dear. Mr. Johnson doesn't object in the least. (*To MISS POLE.*) Have you been here long?

MISS P. Only the matter of a few minutes.

MISS M. And, Mary, you are sure that you gave the child good measure? (*Removing bonnet.*)

MARY. Jessie weighed the tea.

MISS M. I always put in a little extra, for fear the scales may be incorrect. (*Puts bonnet and shawl on piano.*)

*Enter MARTHA, L. B.*

MARTHA. A gentleman to see Miss Jessie.

MISS M. A gentleman? Where is he?

MISS P. A *gentleman*, did you say?

MARTHA. I said so, ma'am, and he's in the dining-room.

JESSIE. O Mary, can it be? It can't be?

MARY (*leading JESSIE*). It *can* be, Jessie, and it *is*!

MARTHA. This way, miss. (*To door R. B. Exit JESSIE. MARY waves hand and returns.*)

MISS P. (*to MISS MATTY*). I hope it's all right.

MISS B. It's a great many years, since any one received a gentleman caller in Cranford.

MISS M. You are sure he *is* a *gentleman*, Martha?

MARTHA (*returning to door L. B.*). Indeed, ma'am, it's my opinion he's *more* than a gentleman.

MISS P. What *does* she mean?

MARTHA. I means, ma'am, that he's got the look of a sodger about him, aye, an' an ofricer, too.

MISS P. Goodness gracious! What's going to happen next?

(*Bell rings. MARTHA meets MRS. PURKIS and little SUSAN at door L. B.*)

MARTHA (*announces*). Customers, ma'am.

[*Exit MARTHA, L. B.*

MISS M. (*to MRS. PURKIS, who advances on paper path, pushing little SUSAN along in front*). How do you do, Mrs. Purkis?

MRS. P. Right hearty, ma'am, an' I hope you're the same.

MISS M. And this is little Susan. (*Patting her on the head.*) Are you well, dear?

SUSAN (*bobbing curtsy*). Yes, ma'am, thank you, ma'am. I do be right well.

(*MRS. PURKIS nudges SUSAN, who hangs her head and seems shy.*)

MRS. PURKIS. Speak up now, Susan, like a lady.

SUSAN (*offering basket of apples*). Please ma'am—if it dunnot be takin' a liberty will ye be so kind as to—as to —

MRS. PURKIS. Go on Susan, ye're doin' fine.

SUSAN. —as to accept of these apples growed in our garden.

MISS M. Thank you, my dear little girl, that was very prettily said. Did you hear, Mary?

(*MISS P. and MISS B. again converse, L. F., always conscious of transactions, but apparently oblivious.*)

MARY (*taking apples, which she places on table*). Good child!

MRS. PURKIS (*to MISS MATTY, who goes behind table*). And here, Miss Jenkyns, is the matter of a few new-laid eggs. My old man sends 'em, an' hopes they'll strengthen ye, he do.

MISS M. (*taking eggs*). My friends are so kind, Mrs. Purkis. Now what can I do for you?

MRS. PURKIS. Well, if you don't mind, Miss Jenkyns, I would liken a pound o' that good green tea.

MISS M. So soon, Mrs. Purkis? Don't you think you are using a great deal of tea? It is so unwholesome to drink too much—and then *green* tea is the most injurious as well as the most expensive.

MRS. PURKIS. I know, ma'am, but we are that fond of it.

MARY. Miss Matty, let me get the tea.

(MARY takes MISS MATTY'S place behind table. MISS M. returns to guests. MARY makes business of weighing tea, taking money, etc.)

MISS P. (to MISS B.). Of course there *may* be something in it.

MISS B. Mrs. Jamieson said, only yesterday, that *she* thought it about time that Jessie Brown left off her dimples, and stopped trying to look young, for she'd never get a husband in Cranford.

MISS P. Stuff and nonsense. I don't believe that she *wants* a husband.

MISS M. I am sorry to be so interrupted —

MISS P. (*rising*). I came to borrow your receipt for sponge biscuit, Miss Matty.

MISS M. O, yes, it is all ready for you. Let me see—O, yes, I put it under the peppermint lozenges.

(Gets receipt for MISS POLE.)

MISS B. (*rising*). Miss Jenkyns, I hope you will not think it presumptuous in me, that is —

MARY (to little SUSAN). An ounce of almond paste, did you say?

SUSAN (*curtseys*). Yes, miss. (MARY weighs paste.)

MISS B. My former occupation considered, will you, Miss Matty, excuse the liberty —

MISS M. (*distracted between guests and customers*). Put in an extra piece, Mary.

MARY. But it weighs too much now.

MISS M. I know, but the little dears love it so.

MISS P. It's very indigestible.

MISS B. I wish, madam, to invite you and of course Miss Smith, as she is here, to a card party at my house on Tuesday next.

MISS M. (*curtseying*). We shall be most happy to accept. (*Hurries to table, empties contents of tumbler into SUSAN'S hands, who is just departing with her mother.*) Here, dear, these peppermints will keep the almond paste from disagreeing with you. Good-bye, dear.

[*Exeunt* MRS. P. and SUSAN, L. B.]

MISS B. And you, Miss Smith?

MARY (*curtseying*). I shall be most happy to come, Miss Barker.

MISS B. Miss Pole has already accepted.

MISS M. (*returning from door* L. B.). Mrs. Jamieson is coming, I think you said.

MISS B. I did not say so. But it is a fact. Mrs. Jamieson most kindly and condescendingly said she would be happy to come. One little stipulation she made, that she should bring Carlo. I told her that if I had a weakness it was for dogs.

MISS P. I hate dogs.

MISS M. And Mrs. Forrester, of course?

MISS B. I am going to ask Mrs. Forrester. Although her circumstances are changed, madam, she was *born* a Tyrrell. But, of course, I could not think of asking her until I had asked you, madam, the rector's daughter, madam.

MISS M. Mrs. Fitz-Adams—I suppose —

MISS B. No, madam. I must draw the line somewhere. Mrs. Jamieson would not, I think, like to meet Mrs. Fitz-Adams. She is hardly fit society for such ladies as Mrs. Jamieson and Miss Matilda Jenkyns. (*Low bow to MISS MATTY.*)

MISS P. Miss Betty told me it was to be a choice and select few.

MISS M. So I understand.

(*During following lines of MISS B. enter in single file SUSAN, JAMES and JENNIE, L. B., walk on tiptoe to front of counter and stand facing counter, expectant.*)

MISS B. May I beg you to come as near half-past six, to my little dwelling, as possible, Miss Matilda? Mrs. Jamieson dines at five, but has kindly promised not to delay her visit beyond that time—half-past six.

(*MISS BARKER makes deep curtsey to MISS MATTY, who also curtseys, while MISS POLE and MARY, one L. the other R., also curtsey. MISS MATTY sees children, and recovering herself, hurries behind the counter, with a faint "Excuse me, ladies," and MARTHA at the same time enters precipitately at R., and with both hands on end of counter, facing audience, speaks mysteriously to MISS MATTY. The children stand as in illustration page 266 of the novel.*)

MARTHA. Missus, I thought as how I ought to tell you seein' as it's a happenin' in your house.

MISS B. What is it?

MISS M. O, Martha, not robbers?

MISS P. Is the house on fire?

MARTHA. No, by no means, ma'am. But that orficer man, he's got his arm around Miss Jessie's waist!

MISS P. O, goodness me!

MISS B. Madam, how dreadful!

MISS M. (*smiling and looking very wise*). My dears, I really believe it is the most proper place in the world for that gentleman's arm to be in.

(*All look astonished but MARY, who claps her hands.*)

QUICK CURTAIN.

### ACT III.

SCENE.—MISS BARKER'S parlor. Plainly furnished, not so many signs of past elegance as in MISS MATTY'S room. Piano across B. C. Door L. F. Table R. C. Small stand R. F. Large arm-chair with footstool L. F. A large screen across L. B., behind which the ladies remove wraps and bonnets, and prepare for the evening. Bring caps in old-fashioned band-boxes. The calash is worn over the cap. A mirror may be hung on wall L., behind screen; all arranged so that the audience can see the prinking. Chairs R. F. and about room. Door R. B. Candelabras on piano and table, two tall candlesticks on mantel R. One candle lighted. MISS BETTY discovered giving directions to PEGGY.

PEGGY. The parlor do look beautiful, missus.

MISS B. O, Peggy, how careless; that candle has burned too long. (PEGGY darts at candle, and blows it out.) Now hurry, Peggy, and light the other one. If they are uneven, the ladies might think we only burned one when we were alone.

PEGGY (*lighting candle*). O, ma'am, they'd never be that discernin'.

MISS B. Is the supper all right?

PEGGY. Indeed, ma'am, it's coom out fine.

MISS B. (*smiling*). And the little Cupids, how do they look?

PEGGY. Them macaroons has sopped the brandy, till it just makes your mouth water to look at 'em. (*Smacks lips*.)

MISS B. Then everything is ready. Now get your spill and at the first knock, light the candles.

(PEGGY gets lamp-lighter; knocking heard. PEGGY starts to door L.)

MISS B. O, wait, Peggy, wait till I've run upstairs and washed my hands. (PEGGY returns, lights taper at burning candle and proceeds to light others.) When I cough, open the door. I'll not be a minute.

(Exit MISS B., R. Knocking heard again. MISS BARKER coughs.

PEGGY stands C., smiling; at sound of cough darts to door L. Ushers in MISS POLE and MRS. FORRESTER.)

PEGGY. This way, ladies.

(Shows them to space behind screen. MRS. FORRESTER wears a calash, which she removes. MISS POLE brings cap in band-box. Removes bonnet and adjusts cap at mirror. Meantime MISS BARKER re-enters parlor R. and sits chair R. stately and composed.)

PEGGY (*announces*). Miss Pole—Mrs. Forrester.

MISS P. After you, ma'am.

(*MRS. F. enters first. Exit PEGGY, L.*)

MISS B. (*rising*). Good-evening, ladies.

MRS. F. and MISS P. (*making deep curtses*). Good-evening

(*MISS BARKER offers chair next to large armchair to MRS. F.*

*MISS POLE sits in armchair.*)

MISS B. Not there, dear Miss Pole, not there. Allow me.

MISS P. (*rising abruptly*). O!

MISS B. (*offering another chair*). The seat of honor—ahem—Mrs. Jamieson, you know.

MISS P. Excuse me. (*Sits in chair offered.*)

(*Knocking heard.*)

MISS B. Miss Jenkyns is a little late. I particularly mentioned half after six.

(*PEGGY ushers MISS JENKYNs and MARY behind screen; same business of preparation.*)

MISS P. I think she has arrived.

MISS B. I do hope Mrs. Jamieson will not keep us waiting. The evenings are so short.

PEGGY (*announces*). Miss Jenkyns—Miss Smith. [*Exit L.*

MISS B. (*greeting guests*). Good-evening, ladies. Delighted, I am sure.

(*Offers chairs. MISS JENKYNs sits beside MRS. F., MARY near MISS P., R.*)

MISS B. Now there is only Mrs. Jamieson to come.

MARY (*timidly*). And Jessie Brown?

MISS B. And Miss Jessie, of course.

MISS P. What do you think, Miss Matty, what do you think of that proceeding at your house the other day?

MISS M. In regard to Miss Jessie? Well, I—I think she is going to marry —

MRS. F. (*interrupting*). Eh—Marry? Miss Jessie?

MISS M. (*slowly to MRS. F.*). Yes. Mrs. Forrester, I think Jessie Brown is engaged to be married to Major Gordon, an officer in her majesty's service.

MISS P. Don't you know.

MISS M. Ask Mary.

MARY. It is true. The engagement was announced to-day.

MISS B. Dear, dear me! Two people that we know, going to get married.

MISS M. It's coming very near.

MISS P. So near, that my heart stops beating.

MISS M. One doesn't know whose turn may come next.

MISS P. Pshaw! (*Knocking.*)

(PEGGY ushers in MISS JESSIE, who throws off her wrap, glances in mirror, and enters at once, all the ladies expectant.)

PEGGY. Miss Jessie Brown.

[Exit PEGGY.]

*Enter JESSIE; Miss B. meets her, C. Deep curtseys.*

MISS B. My dear miss, you are very welcome. Let me here and now, my dear young lady—offer you my humble congratulations.

MISS J. (*glancing at MARY*). Thank you, indeed, Miss Barker, you are very kind.

MISS P. (*rising*). And mine, Miss Jessie.

MRS. F. (*rising*). And mine.

MISS M. (*rising*). You know, dear, you have mine.

JESSIE. Ladies, you overwhelm me. You are very, very kind.

(*Escapes to MARY, R. F. All sit.*)

MRS. F. And when is it to be, my dear? The wedding I mean.

JESSIE. Major Gordon says in one month from now.

MISS P. You take my breath away.

MISS B. Shall you live in Cranford?

JESSIE. O no. Major Gordon returns to India in six weeks.

MISS M. And Cranford is to lose a charming young lady.

MISS B. But she still has——

PEGGY (*announces loudly*). The Hon. Mrs. Jamieson.

*Enter MRS. J. with slow and stately tread, leading Carlo on a string. All rise.*

MISS B. (*with deep curtsey*). And now my little dwelling is indeed honored. (*All curtsey.*)

MRS. J. (*slowly*). Good-evening, ladies.

(*Glances about with eyeglass. MISS BARKER indicates armchair, L. F.*)

MRS. J. Shall I sit here?

MISS B. If it so pleases you, dear madam.

MRS. J. And Carlo?

MISS B. (*anxiously*). Would he like an armchair?

MRS. J. O, no. He can sit on my lap for the present.

(*All sit as soon as MRS. J. has made herself comfortable.*)

MRS. J. (*putting up her eyeglass*). Is that Jessie Brown?

MISS B. It is, Mrs. Jamieson.

MRS. J. Her dimples have carried the day—eh?

(*All smile; a little titter. Enter PEGGY, door R., with tray and tea things which she places on table. MISS BARKER arranges teacups.*) [Exit PEGGY, R.]

MISS M. (*to MRS. J.*). We have all been congratulating Miss Jessie on her engagement,

MRS. J. (*drawing*). Well—I—don't know. India is very unhealthy. Lie down, Carlo. (*Puts Carlo on floor.*)

*Enter PEGGY with small tray, and plates on which are oysters and biscuits, ready to serve.*

MISS B. What have we here, Peggy?

PEGGY. Oysters, ma'am.

MISS B. Oysters? Shell-fish—O yes. (*Takes a plate herself and passes it to MRS. JAMIESON. PEGGY passes to others.*) Allow me, madam, to serve you, myself.

MRS. J. Oysters? No, thank you, Miss Barker, I have just dined.

MISS B. Will you not honor my humble abode, madam, by tasting them?

MRS. J. No. (*Examining the plate with eyeglass.*) No, thank you, they look very nice, but I have dined.

MISS B. Mrs. Jamieson has just dined, ladies. If you will excuse me, I will order a more tempting dish for Mrs. Jamieson. Peggy—bring some little Cupids.

(PEGGY passes plate to MRS. J., on which are two macaroons.)

MRS. J. (*accepting*). Thank you. (*Nibbles macaroons.*)

(MARY, JESSIE and MISS P., R. F. *All are served. MISS BARKER sits at tea-table, pouring tea.*)

MISS B. My dear Mrs. Jamieson, will you take sugar and cream in your tea?

MRS. J. Two lumps of sugar, Miss Barker, but *no* cream. I never take cream.

MISS B. O, excuse me.

(PEGGY passes tea to MRS. J., taking away plate. *Passes tea to others. Carlo barks.*)

MISS B. O, the poor 'ittie doggy—I'm forgetting him. Would he like some supper?

MRS. J. Just pass me an extra saucer—if you please. (PEGGY brings saucer.) Put it *there*. (*Indicates floor, c.*) Now the cream-jug. (PEGGY brings jug.)

MRS. J. (*pointing to saucer*). Now fill the saucer. (PEGGY pours little.) Fill it up—fill it up. Carlo is *very* fond of cream. (PEGGY pours more. Carlo laps it.)

PEGGY (*returning jug to MISS B.*). Do you mind that, ma'am?

MISS B. (*shaking head at P.*). Sh—it's all right, Peggy. (*Sighing.*) It's all right.

(*All drink tea; PEGGY passes cakes to MRS. J.*)

MRS. J. (*examining plate*). Seed cakes always remind me of

scented soap. However, I'll take one, if you please. Here, Carlo. (*Gives bit to dog.*)

MISS P. (*to JESSIE*). I can't match that pink shade of Shetland wool anywhere.

JESSIE. My uncle keeps a shop in Edinboro' —

MISS B. (*hastily interrupting, while all cast dismayed glances at MRS. J., who is throwing bits of cake to Carlo*). My dear Miss Jessie, can't you give us some music. (*Aside.*) Peggy, take Miss Jessie's cup.

MISS M. Do, dear, do give us some music.

JESSIE. Certainly, in a moment. (*To MISS POLE.*) My uncle has a fine assortment of Shetland wools. I will send for the shade you want. (*Rises.*)

MISS B. Will you sing? Miss Smith will play for you, I am sure.

(*MARY goes to piano, JESSIE sings "Jack O' Hazledean," standing, R. F. Ladies beat time, some of them off the measure. PEGGY quietly removes tray, etc., during song, entices Carlo away, carrying him off, R. B. Brings pack of cards and places on table R. at close of song.*)

MISS B. Thank you, my dear miss. Now how shall we make a pool. (*Counting ladies.*)

MISS SMITH. Leave me out, please, Miss Barker.

JESSIE. And me, too. I really do not know the game.

MRS. F. Eh. What is it? Preference?

MISS B. I will look on, ladies. For really I can't tell Spadille from Manille.

(*Heavy snore heard. MRS. J. is fast asleep.*)

MISS B. Sh. We will not disturb Mrs. Jamieson. (*Takes candle to small table, R. F.*) Young ladies, perhaps you can amuse yourselves with some books. Here is Pickwick. (*PEGGY brings book.*) Or cribbage. (*PEGGY brings cribbage board.*)

(*The four ladies, MISS P., MISS M., MRS. F., and MISS B. settle themselves at card table, R. C. Shuffle and deal cards. Play excitedly, nodding heads vigorously. See illustration, page 122.*)

MISS B. It is very gratifying to me, very gratifying indeed to see how completely Mrs. Jamieson feels at home in my poor little dwelling. (*Loud snore.*) She could not have paid me a greater compliment.

MRS. F. Ombre and Quadrille.

MISS M. Jack's up.

MISS P. A fig for his heels.

MISS B. Hush, ladies—if you please—hush. Mrs. Jamieson is asleep. (*To MRS. F. in loud whisper, making motions with lips.*) I said—hush—if you please, hush—Mrs. Jamieson is asleep. (*Loud snore. Ladies continue to play.*)

MARY (*to JESSIE*). Are you glad to leave Cranford?

JESSIE. Glad, and sorry. They have been very kind to me here. I shall like to come back.

MARY. Yes, Cranford is a good place to visit. And sometimes, (*archly*) things happen—even here.

MISS P. Basto, ma'am, you have Spadille.

MRS. J. (*rousing*). Eh. What did you say?

*Enter PEGGY with tray containing decanter and glasses. Ladies throw down cards. PEGGY places tray on table.*

MISS B. (*rising*). What have we now, Peggy?

MRS. J. The room is so light. I was glad to close my eyes.

MISS B. (*pouring glass of cherry brandy*). Allow me Mrs. Jamieson. It is quite harmless, I assure you. Just a little home-made cherry brandy. (*MRS. J. accepts glass.*)

MISS M. (*refusing*). No, no, I thank you.

MRS. F. Cherry brandy? I think not, thank you!

MISS B. O, please, just a leetle, leetle glass, ladies. After oysters, you know. Shell-fish are sometimes thought unwholesome.

MISS M. (*relenting*). Then a very, very little drop.

*(All accept, and sip, quackle and choke.)*

MISS P. It's very strong. I do believe there's spirit in it.

MISS B. Only a little drop, just necessary to make it keep.

MISS M. We put brandy paper over preserves to make *them* keep.

MISS B. I often feel quite tipsy myself, from eating damson tart.

MRS. J. (*having swallowed the contents of her glass, and ruminated for a moment*). My sister-in-law, Lady Glenmire, is coming to stay with me.

ALL. Indeed.

PEGGY (*at door L.*). Sedan chair for Mrs. Jamieson.

Mrs. J. (*slowly rising*). Miss Barker, will you tell your maid to bring Carlo.

*[Exit PEGGY R., re-enters with Carlo. Goes behind screen.]*

MRS. J. Good-night. I have passed a very pleasant evening. (*Slow curtsey.*) Good-night.

*[Exit MRS. J. behind screen.]*

ALL (*rise and curtsey*). Good-night.

MISS B. (*aside to ladies*). I really think she means it. I think she has enjoyed herself. Very gratifying, indeed.

*[Exit MRS. J. door, L.]*

MISS B. Shall we have another game of cards, ladies?

MISS M. Isn't it too late?

MRS. F. I'm afraid it is.

MISS P. It must be nearly nine o'clock.

PEGGY (*at door L.*). Mrs. Forrester's maid.

MISS B. (*to MRS. F.*). Your maid has come for you.

MRS. F. My maid. I must go directly.

MISS B. Shall you walk, Mrs. Forrester?

MRS. F. O, yes. I prefer to walk, the air is so refreshing.

MISS M. And the stars are so bright.

PEGGY (*at door*). I'll tell her.

MARTHA (*outside*). No you won't. I'll tell her myself.

*Enter MARTHA, breathless, carrying a large lantern.*

MARTHA (*to MISS MATTY, who stands c.*). O, missus, come home, come home. There's a gentleman to see you.

MISS M. A gentleman? To see me? At this time o' night? O, Martha, you must be mistaken.

(*Consternation. MARY slips behind screen and gets MISS M.'s bonnet and shawl.*)

MISS B. O—

MRS. F. Dear me.

MISS P. What *can* she mean?

MARTHA. It's true as gospel. He's a sittin' in missus' parlor this blessed minute, an' he said I was to bring her as quick as ever I could.

MISS M. O, dear, what *shall* I do?

MISS P. *Do*, Miss Matty. Get your bonnet on, and go home as fast as ever you *can*, and see what it means.

MISS B. I *hope*, madam, that you will find nothing wrong.

MISS M. Mary, my dear, where are you?

MARY (*approaching with wraps*). Here, Miss Matty.

MISS M. O, do you think, my dear, that—that my brother can have returned?

MARY. We will go and see.

MISS M. Martha, is he a *young* man,—straight and tall, with very black hair?

MARTHA. Laws, no, missus. He's risin' seventy an' his hair's as white as snow.

MISS M. (*decidedly*). Then it can't be *Peter*.

MARTHA. Yes, it can, ma'am.

MISS P. What do you mean, Martha?

(*MARY and JESSIE, R. C., are hastily dressing MISS M., c. who is very agitated, MARTHA, L. C., MISS P., R., MRS. F. and MISS B., L. PEGGY peeking in door.*)

MARTHA. The gentleman said, ma'am, as how I was not to startle missus, or to speak sudden, but to break it to her gently and just say, "*Peter's come back*," an' then to bring her home as fast as ever I could.

MISS M. O, do you hear, my dear friends, *do* you hear? My brother has returned. My brother Peter has come back. My—(*bursts into tears and sits abruptly c.*)

MARY. There, there, Miss Matty.

JESSIE. We will take you home, dear Miss Matty.

MISS B. Calm yourself, madam, calm yourself.

MRS. F. Dear, dear! To think that now you will have some one to take care of you.

JESSIE. And at last, there will be a *man* in Cranford.

MISS P. A man in Cranford. It will be a great experiment.

MISS M. (*rising; quite composed*). I know, my dears. I know—but, O, I am sure we shall all find it very comforting. (*Taking MARY's hand.*) Come, Mary.

### QUICK CURTAIN.

NOTE.—*A very effective ending may be made in this manner. At MISS M.'s exclamation, "Come, Mary," exeunt, L., MISS M., MARY and JESSIE, preceded by MARTHA, holding lantern high to light the passage.*

MISS P. An exciting ending to your party, Miss Barker. Good-night.

MISS B. Good-night.

[*Exit MISS P. abruptly, L., conducted by PEGGY.*

MRS. F. Dear, dear me! I have kept my maid waiting a long time. Good-night, Miss Barker. I have enjoyed myself exceedingly. Good-night.

[*Exit MRS. F., L., also conducted by PEGGY, who reappears.*

MISS B. (C.). Yes, I think that they have enjoyed themselves. But O! how tired I am. (*Goes to chair, L. F.*) And Mrs. Jamison, the Hon. Mrs. Jamison, has sat here! (*Patting the chair.*) Here—in my humble abode. (*Sits carefully and respectfully in chair.*) My card party has been very sat-is-fac-tory. (*Yawns.*) Very! (*Drops asleep.*)

PEGGY (*returns; sees her mistress; mutters*). Poor dear old thing! (*Proceeds, on tiptoe, to blow out candles one by one.*)

### SLOW CURTAIN.

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# New Plays for Female Characters

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## ENDYMION

### A Comedy in Three Acts

*By Marie Josephine Warren*

Twenty-three females or less, if desired. Costumes classical; scenery, one exterior, unimportant. Plays an hour and a half. A very bright and graceful classical comedy suitable for out-of-door performance, if desired. Written for the use of a prominent girls' school and very successful in performance. Easy to get up and very effective. Introduces dancing. Strongly recommended.

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### A Farce in Two Acts

*By Abby Bullock and Margaret Currier Lyon*

Twelve females. Costumes modern; scenery, an interior and an exterior. Plays an hour and a quarter. Specially written for performance by a Providence (R. I.) school, and strongly recommended for similar uses. Very lively and amusing, easy to get up, and all the parts of nearly equal prominence. Full of the "college atmosphere" that is so desirable in this sort of thing.

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### A Comedy in One Act

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Seven females. Costumes modern; scenery, an interior. Plays twenty-five minutes. A capital little play for young girls, very original in idea and effective in the acting. The part of Susan is an admirable one for a girl with some capacity for comic acting. Can be made very pretty in production with very little trouble. Strongly recommended for school performance.

*Price, 15 cents*

## THE MERRY WIDOW HAT

### A Farce in One Act

*By Helen Sherman Griffith*

Five females. Costumes modern; scenery, an easy interior. Plays thirty minutes. An excellent school play for three young girls and two character women, one very funny low comedy country girl. Easy and amusing and very sympathetic in theme, pretty sure to suit the taste of most girls and can be recommended to them.

*Price, 15 cents*

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# New Plays

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## A RUSSIAN ROMANCE

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

For Female Characters only

*By Helen Kane*

*Author of "A POINT OF HONOR," etc.*

Sixteen female characters. Scenes, two interiors; costumes modern. Plays two hours. A very exceptionally dramatic and effective play for all women, high in tone and quite above the average in quality. Calls for strong acting by three of its characters, has several good character parts and a number of minor parts that call for handsome dressing. An excellent play for a woman's club, easy to stage and absorbing in interest. Confidently recommended to the best taste.

*Price, 25 cents*

### CHARACTERS

|                                                                   |                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| MLLE. SANNOM ( <i>Olga Petrovna</i> ), a Russian refugee.         | MRS. TREMAINE, <i>cousin to Mrs. Willner</i> ; a "manager."     |
| MADAME IGNATIEFF, <i>wife of the Russian Ambassador.</i>          | LADY GRAY, <i>wife of English Ambassador.</i>                   |
| MADAME LUVOFF, <i>wife of Attaché, Russian Embassy.</i>           | MADAME DE FAYEUSE, <i>wife of French Minister.</i>              |
| MRS. WILLNER, <i>wife of Senator</i> ,—kindly and inconsequent.   | MRS. WESTON, } <i>Calls at Senator Willner's</i>                |
| ASENATH, <i>her daughter, aged eighteen; romantic but loyal.</i>  | MISS ELLETT, } <i>This number may be inc. ea. if desirable.</i> |
| LORNA, <i>her "Baby," aged six; rebellious—"enfant terrible."</i> | MISS DE LORNE,                                                  |
|                                                                   | MISS FAIRFAX,                                                   |
|                                                                   | MISS DE PEYSTER,                                                |
|                                                                   | SASHA, <i>maid at Russian Legation.</i>                         |
|                                                                   | HULDAH, <i>maid to Mrs. Willner.</i>                            |

### SYNOPSIS

ACT I. SCENE 1.—At Senator Willner's. Olga (Mlle. Sannom) arrives in America, in search of her brother.  
SCENE 2.—The same. She "manages" the "unmanageable."  
ACT II. SCENE 1.—"Calling day" at Senator Willner's. Olga meets an old friend, and is seen by her enemy.  
SCENE 2.—At the Russian Embassy. Story of the escape from Siberia. The enemy threatens.  
ACT III. SCENE 1.—At the Embassy again. Olga meets her enemy.  
SCENE 2.—At Mrs. Willner's. The enemy conquered.

## THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

A FAIRY PLAY

*By W. B. Yeats*

Three male, three female characters. Scenery, a plain interior; costumes, Irish peasant. Plays half an hour. An excellent example of this author's work. It has been extensively used in this country by schools of acting, and the present edition was made for this purpose. Perfectlyactable, but most unconventional in form and treatment. Offered to students rather than for acting.

*Price, 15 cents*

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# New Plays

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## SUMMER BOARDERS OR, THE GREAT JEWEL MYSTERY

A COMEDY-DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

*By Josephine Van Tassel Bruorton*

Eight males, seven females. Costumes, modern; scenery, one interior and one exterior. Plays a full evening. Combines dramatic interest with abundant comedy, and is particularly strong in character parts. Contains an unusual number and variety of strong parts.

*Price, 25 cents*

### CHARACTERS

JOSHUA WICKS, owner of "close onto 1,000 acres."

MR. PETER SCHULTZ, sometime vendor of sausages.

MR. BARRY BLAND, an Englishman possessed of a shady reputation and a talkative daughter.

COUNT DE MUSSET, after the 1,000 acres and Arvilla Wicks.

ARCHIE BARTON, a young lawyer, after the widow.

GEORGE MANGAN, with an admiration for wealth.

TOM SHARPE, a retired detective, faithful to Karrenhappuch Wicks.

ADONIRAM SMITH, the hired man, with a fickle heart.

ARVILLA WICKS, heiress of the 1,000 acres.

MRS. PETER SCHULTZ, owner of many jewels.

MRS. BARRY BLAND, owner of a husband and a daughter.

BARRETTA BLAND, tenacious and talkative.

MISS KARRINHAPPUCH WICKS, sister to Joshua.

WIDOW WILKINS, after a rich husband.

PANSY PRATT, who worships Adoniram.

### SYNOPSIS

ACT I. — Dinner out of doors.

INTERLUDE. — The Robbery.

ACT II. — Tracing Lost Jewels.

ACT III. — Dreaming True.

ACT IV. — The Jewels Restored.

## THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

A COMEDY BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ARRANGED IN AN INDUCTION AND THREE ACTS FOR THE USE OF  
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Fifteen male, three female characters. Scenery, greatly simplified, or may be omitted altogether, if desired, by the use of curtains only. Costumes, of the period. Plays two hours. An arrangement of this play for the use of schools, restoring the form of the original, but retaining the necessary simplifications of the modern stage version.

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